1

Children

Good morning, boys and girls. I am glad to see you, and I’m glad you have come to church today.

This morning I want someone to tell us what this is. (Let them answer.) That’s’ right. This is a pair of crutches. They have been adjusted to fit you. I want one of you to show us how to walk with crutches. (Let a volunteer demonstrate.) You did real well.

Now, I want to tell you a story I heard when I was about your age. A man was out in his yard one day, and he saw a boy coming up the street with another boy on his back. It was obvious the younger boy was crippled and unable to walk. When they came by the man he said, "Son, isn’t he too heavy for you to be carrying on your back?" The boy replied, "He ain’t heavy. He’s my brother."

Some years ago someone took that story and made a popular song out of it. "He ain’t heavy, he’s my brother."

Our Scripture for today tells us that when Jesus saw the crowd he had compassion for them. This does not mean he had pity for them, or just felt sorry for them. He did something even better than that.

When Jesus looked at people who were sick, blind, alone, crippled, or afraid, he had compassion for them. This means he felt their pain in his heart. He took their pain upon himself, and he tried to help them.

And, boys and girls, Jesus wants to live in us in such a way that you and I would have this same kind of feeling. He wants us to be people who care about other people.

All of us know people who are sick, or have problems. Jesus wants us to love them. He wants to love them through us. This will mean that sometime we will take someone’s burden on ourselves as we try to help them.

When we do that, we discover that this person, and this person’s problem, is not heavy - because this person has become our brother or sister.

Jesus said one time, "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." When we help someone carry their load, we are letting Jesus love them through us.

Adult

What’s up with pets?  While I grew up in a housing project where pets were not allowed, I still did not see people dote on their pets the way they do now.  It seems that we Americans spend $136 billion on our pets; dog-owners spend over $1500 a year on their dogs; cats are a bit cheaper. Their owners spend $1100.  What’s up with this? While some might be cynical, suggesting that people care more about their pets than our culture cares about children living in poverty, I think the issue is more positive: an expansion of empathy among modern Americans.  Whatever we feel toward each other in our divided country, we are able to imagine the feelings of animals much more vividly than we could decades ago.  We feel inwardly sick when we hear about an animal being abused; this says a lot about the expansion of our human hearts.

  I want to suggest that this expansion of our hearts might be a way to begin to appreciate the heart of God.  In our first reading, Jeremiah speaks of God’s disgust with the leaders of his people because they are neglecting and abusing them.  Jeremiah was not alone.  Ezekiel is even more disgusted with the leadership.  They both talk of God the Shepherd.  The remedy: God will come and be shepherd.  God will give God’s people the care that they should have.

  This is an important image of how God is.  Many of us sat through catechism classes or even philosophy classes that depicted God as something like a remote, all-powerful, arbitrary Emperor whom we could only approach with fear.  “You must be silent in the presence of the King,” was the attitude we were urged to have.  Our prayers would beg God to hear us, as if God couldn’t be bothered.

  Contrast that with the Gospel.  Jesus doesn’t sit in the Temple asking people to come to him.  He is wandering the countryside, visiting the very people whose lives counted for the least in that ancient culture.  In our passage this week, Jesus and his disciples are exhausted and looking to get away for a break.  But the people come to him anyway.  The Gospel says that he had compassion on them.  They were like wandering sheep and he wasn’t going to let them feel neglected.

  The Gospel is inviting us to begin appreciating the infinite empathy of God. If our empathy has expanded even to our pets, or sometimes even to our cars given the way some people talk about their auto, God’s empathy far exceeds any extent we can expand our hearts.  We re made in God’s image and likeness, meaning God sees us as God sees himself.  The love of shepherds for sheep, the love of parents for their children, the love of husbands and wives—these are shadows of the divine and infinite love that embraces every moment of our existence.  Especially when we are in the greatest suffering.

We are careful not to push our animals to work beyond their strength when they need to lie down we let them just stay there. If we were only that good to ourselves. Jesus took a break in today's gospel and is telling us to do the same.

 I want to begin this morning by making one thing clear. YOU AND I HAVE A RELIGIOUS RESPONSIBILITY TO GOOF OFF FROM TIME TO TIME. It's true. That may sound like a strange point to be made from the pulpit, but it is true. We have a responsibility to take time to rest, to relax, to take off our shoes, loosen our tie, take down our hair and let it all hang out, as they used to say. God did not create us to be busy as bees all the time.

That is a truth incorporated in the very heart of the Judeo-Christian tradition with the idea of the Sabbath. At the heart of the Ten Commandments we read, "Remember the Sabbath Day and keep it holy." What does that mean? The tradition of the Sabbath in the Scriptures is too rich to boil down to a simple sermon, but let's consider a couple of truths ” one of which is often ignored. THE SABBATH IS TO BE A DAY OF REST. This truth is based on the creation story. God worked six days and rested on the seventh. God said we are to rest one day in seven, too. Our Jewish and Seventh Day Adventist friends celebrate Saturday as the Sabbath. Most Christians celebrate Sunday, in honor of Christ's resurrection. I truly doubt God cares which day is reserved for the Sabbath, but it is to be a day of rest. I don't know about you, but I'm kind of sad to see more and more commercial businesses encroaching on the Sabbath. Sunday has become a major shopping day. It makes me sad not because I am one of those legalistic busybodies who wants to restrict people and make them live according to my standards. No, I am sad because working on Sunday takes many people not only away from their churches but also away from their families. It deprives them of the best opportunity in the week to rest and relax. Sabbath is intended as a day of rest.

Secondly, we need to note that THE SABBATH WAS CREATED FOR OUR BENEFIT. That is the truth about the Sabbath that is often ignored. The Sabbath was not created for God ” it was created for us. That is a point that Jesus made emphatically in Mark's Gospel, the second chapter. Jesus and his disciples were going through the grainfields and the disciples began plucking heads of grain. They were hungry men ” but this was the Sabbath and plucking grain was considered work. The Pharisees brought this transgression to Jesus' attention. Jesus answered with a Biblical precedent set by King David and then said, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath."  
 The point is this: YOU AND I NEED ONE DAY A WEEK IN WHICH WE DO NO WORK. None. Absolutely none. God means for us to have one day a week in which we worship and visit friends and relatives and take a nap and go bicycling with our family and do whatever it is that helps to refresh and rekindle our minds, our bodies and our spirits. We need one day a week for goofing off. That is our religious responsibility. That is the first thing we need to see. Here is the second: GOOFING OFF IS NOT ONLY A RELIGIOUS RESPONSIBILITY, IT IS A KEY TO A SUCCESSFUL LIFE.  
 One of the great myths in life is that the people who succeed in the world are people who forever keep their nose to the grindstone. If you believe that, I am sorry to burst your bubble, but it simply is not true. Hard work, dedication, sacrifice are important attributes in life ” but some of the most effective people who ever lived have spent a considerable amount of time goofing off. We are told that influential men like Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer and John Maynard Keynes only worked two-three hours daily. Their leisurely approach is not widely known because they seldom advertised it. As Ralph Keyes notes in his book TIMELOCK, there is far more prestige in seeming harried and overworked than in being able to get a lot done in limited amounts of time. As a result, history's nonworkaholics have covered up their apparent indolence, sometimes in the most brazen way. "I have, all my life long, been lying [down] till noon," Samuel Johnson once admitted. "Yet I tell all young men, and tell them with great sincerity, that nobody who does not rise early will ever do any good."  
 Benjamin Franklin was history's greatest source of "early to bed, early to rise" type aphorisms, yet he himself liked to stay up late playing chess or chatting with friends. He whiled away hours tinkering with kites, bottles, keys, stoves. After introducing the first bathtub to this country in 1790, Franklin spent many hours inside his own, soaking and reading. Although he advised us to make productive use even of our leisure time, he himself took long, enjoyable tours of Europe. In this sense, says Ralph Keyes, he was a fraud, far wiser in his actual approach to time than the one he proposed for the rest of us. We've taken Franklin's advice, says Keyes; we should have followed his example.   
 Now, am I encouraging us to slothfulness? Not in the least. Most of us, by necessity, and some of us by choice, will always work at least forty, and some of us fifty and even sixty hours a week. Businesses today are requiring more and more productivity out of fewer and fewer employees. But we are not robots. We are human beings who need time for rest and revitalization. In today's world it is just as important to work smart as it is to work hard. We need to rest both our bodies and our brains. And over a life-time we will be more productive if we allow ourselves time for relaxation.  
 Nobody was ever more committed to his work than Jesus of Nazareth. So much was at stake and there was so little time. Yet Jesus said to his disciples on more than one occasion, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." Sometimes, it did not work out like Jesus planned. Often the crowds would not let him alone. But Jesus recognized humanity's need to loosen the strings on the bow from time to time. We all need to get away. We need to rest and relax.  
 WE ALSO NEED A TIME FOR FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD. Often when Jesus took his disciples off by themselves, it was for a season of prayer. Jesus knew that we not only need to refresh our bodies and to refresh our minds, we need to refresh our spirits as well. That is why the Sabbath has always been a time for worship as well as a time for rest. When we come into this room, we empty ourselves of the strain and toil of the week just passed. And we open ourselves to the new possibilities that God has in store for us. If we truly worship, we should leave here feeling refreshed and ready to face the world.  
 Two willow trees grew a short distance from a stream in New Mexico. One of them was sturdy and rich with leaves, while the other was smaller and less attractive.Over the years the owner of the property wondered why the two trees should have such a different quality and appearance. Unable to find an answer, he dismissed the puzzle from his mind. One week while digging near the trees his shovel struck something hard. When uncovering it he solved the mystery of the trees. Years earlier, someone had buried large slabs of a stone wall in the spot. The underground wall prevented the roots of the frail tree from reaching the water in the stream. But there was no wall between the flourishing tree and the water. When we do not give ourselves time to worship God ” when we do not spend time communing with God and having fellowship with God ” then we are like that tree that was shut off from the life-giving flow of the stream.

A writer in a book called BEGINNINGS put it this way. "Some folks in Holland call the Sabbath 'God's Dyke.' A helpful analogy. The dyke is a protective sea wall that holds back the surging waves and allows people to live in areas that would otherwise be utterly uninhabitable. The Sabbath is like that. Just like a dyke keeps the quiet Holland farmlands from being engulfed by the Atlantic, a day of rest can keep us from being engulfed by destructive value systems and the corrosive pressures of contemporary society. Humans are such pliable creatures. Immersed in the push-and-shove of daily living, we are in danger of being squeezed into a misshapen caricature of what God intended us to become. The Sabbath is God's opportunity to remold us into His image."

"Come away by yourselves," said Jesus, "to a lonely place, and rest awhile." Good advice. We need time to relax with our families and friends and we need a time to worship God. That most prolific of all poets, Anonymous, once put it like this:

Take time to LAUGH, it is the music of the soul.  
Take time to THINK, it is the source of power.  
Take time to PLAY, it is the source of perpetual youth.  
Take time to READ, it is the foundation of wisdom.  
Take time to PRAY, it is the greatest power on earth.  
Take time to LOVE AND BE LOVED, it is a God-given privilege.  
Take time to be FRIENDLY, it is the road to happiness.  
Take time to GIVE, it is too short a day to be selfish.  
Take time to WORK, it is the price of success.  
Take time for GOD, it is the way of life.

We sometimes talk to our pets like we talk to toddlers: our pitch is raised and we use what we think is children’s language.  But when God wanted to talk to us, he sent his Word not as a high-pitched voice but as a Son who gives his life . . .  and is raised from the dead so he can keep on giving his life to us.

2

In today's gospel we are not told if our Lord actually said it, or whether he simply thought it: "They are like sheep without a shepherd." Modern medicine has an amazing diagnostic tool called Magnetic Resonance Imaging -- MRI. The machine provides the magnetic magic and computers translate it all into pictures sharper than X-ray. Whether Jesus thought it or said it, what we have here is the Messiah's Reaction Imagery: "They are like sheep without a shepherd."

The disciples had returned from their teaching trips through the villages. They reported to their Teacher. Their experiences must have ranged from tearful acceptances of the good news and of Jesus as the promised Messiah to outright rejection of their message and even ridicule of their persons. Now, here in this once deserted spot, they found themselves surrounded by a mixed mob of people, some hoping to see miracles, some suffering and sick, all hoping for healing, all pressing to see Jesus. And his MRI -- his Messianic Imaging? "They are like sheep without a shepherd."

For good or for ill, the shepherd-sheep analogy is a much-used biblical image. In the First Lesson (Jeremiah 23:1-6) today the prophet Jeremiah places that comparison in the mouth of "the Lord, the God of Israel." Saint Mark in today's gospel places the same figure of speech in the mouth of the Son of this Lord, the God of Israel. In Jeremiah God condemns those "shepherds who destroy and scatter" the people of God. God promises to gather the scattered sheep and to raise up shepherds who will do a good job of shepherding. In Mark Jesus sees God's task is not yet finished because the people of God were still "like sheep without a shepherd." Clearly, it is hard to get good shepherds and harder to keep them on the job.

But Psalm 23 makes the Lord himself the shepherd. And, of course, Jesus names himself the "Good Shepherd." Saint John writes that Jesus came to his own people and his own did not receive him. This is the greatest evidence that the mission of Jesus was vital; namely, to gather the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 15:25). In the Psalm the sheep knew their shepherd and realized that only with the shepherd's care could they want nothing. But what of those of us who know no shepherd?

May I say a word once more directly to those among us today who linger on the fringe of the flock, who are not ready to confess that this Lord, this Jesus Christ, "is my shepherd"? In all probability you, and most all of us, will acknowledge that we do not feel "sheepish" about our relationship with God. The imagery is not the most helpful for our age. But the vital situation God is making clear to us remains terribly important. "Sheep without a shepherd" describes all whose relationship with God has broken down or is non-existent. That is today's issue. Whether shepherds all did a poor job of shepherding in your case, or as sheep you deliberately scattered, or, poor lambs, you never seem to have had a shepherd or been introduced to God the good shepherd, all that is beside the point at this stage. But alienation from God is a terrible, tragic problem.

For us to realize what scatteredness, what shepherdlessness, what alienation from God means, we might do well to translate all this sheep-shepherd imagery into current terms. From God's point of view every created thing ought to realize that only in God do we live, move, and have being. Of course, there may be some here who do not admit the existence of God. Some of you may not concede that the concept "God" by definition makes that Being the source and the strength and

the ultimate satisfaction of life. But the fact that you are here, even if only on the fringe of Church life, suggests that you do operate at least somewhat on the premise that God exists and that this God has definite relationships with all of us human beings. Come, then, let us reason together in contemporary terms.

Imagine one of those huge trailer trucks which carry six or seven new cars from the factory to your auto dealer's showroom. Those cars were made to be your helper, your servant. You arrive to make one your own, say the red convertible. You are ready to love, honor, and polish it, only to discover that it has this prejudice against gasoline. "I think it stinks. It may cause cancer. One spark and it might explode all over me." What to do? You could abandon it. You could try to reason with it. Beat on it, perhaps.

Now see this Jesus crossing the lake in a boat and coming to a deserted place with his disciples. And whom does he meet? Us. Us without a clue about what turns us over. Us with an aversion to the one thing which gives us life, liberty, and happiness. What is Jesus to do? In him dwells all wisdom and knowledge. By him all things were made. He himself, made as a man, as human as you and I, with arms, legs, organs, brains. The only thing we have he doesn't have is sin. Here he arrives, right off the boat, and discovers us. Some of us have the sheep's biggest problem -- not recognizing the shepherd. Some of us refuse to acknowledge our servanthood. Some scorn or ridicule the theory that gasoline makes the car go round. What did he do then? And now? "He began to teach them many things." What can we learn?

Today's Second Lesson (Ephesians 2:13-22) spells out a great deal of the "many things" Jesus revealed. He surely did not try to teach all of this, then, to those people. God has taught much of this to many of you -- and you will rejoice to hear it all anew. But even if some of you are not all that ready to hear all the details or the mechanics of what Jesus Christ has accomplished for this world, at least focus on what a great guy Jesus is. That was the most astounding of the many things he must have taught them -- that God, almighty, omnipotent God, cares, and not only deeply cares, but, truly, God is present, God is here. His very being there said, "You don't want to miss out on this. You can know God and you can have God's love and care and you can find meaning and purpose in life. Restless? Of course you are -- until you who were made by God, for God, find rest in God." "Come unto me," Jesus said, "and you will find rest!"

He taught them many things. Without God in the world you are without hope. But now God, coming to us in the flesh-and-blood Jesus Christ, has brought us near. God created this "nearness" by being near. "He is our peace!" Much of Ephesians 2:13-22 describes how God-in- Christ has broken down the wall which divided Gentiles and Jews. But it also describes how the wall separating us from God has been broken down, and how God deeply desires to destroy the wall which still divides your heart from God's heart. Hear it that way. Hear more of the many things our Lord taught.

In his flesh-and-blood presence God has broken down the dividing wall of hostility between us and God. To know God-in-Christ is to love God. He has abolished the law which said that if you sin you die. Instead he died. God-in-Christ died and now, by his grace, even though you sin, you are forgiven. God has reconciled all of us to God through the cross, "putting to death that hostility through it." So he came and proclaimed peace -- proclaims now -- peace to you who were far off and to you who are near. Through him all of us have access in one Spirit to the

Father. "So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God."

It's accomplished. It's done. You are in. Accept it! Believe it! Be glad about it! There were many things Jesus did not teach that crowd then. He hadn't yet done many of the things he had come to do. Much of his teaching, all of his dying, his triumphant resurrection, are still in the future. But the essence of it all was there -- for he was there. God was in Christ loving; God was in Christ reconciling the world. And by Messianic Imagery Jesus made that clear. You bring your sick loved one on a mat to him in some marketplace and he touches the one you love and he heals your child, your wife, your husband. Do you doubt that God has come near, that God loves? Of course, God has not done anything like that for many of you, and many of you have asked time and time again. But Jesus did not heal everyone then, and he didn't even touch China or England, not to mention North America. God didn't even spare the Beloved Son the evil which sin has brought down upon us all. But when God delivered up that Son of God for us it has become certain that nothing like death nor illness nor things present nor things to come can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord!

Well. Start your motors. Obviously Jesus would not have tried the automobile-gasoline analogy for that crowd. But he did work with the food analogy. He taught that we could not live on bread alone, but he fed that whole bunch after his sermon. And our Lord is prepared to do the food bit anew for us here. He takes this bread and promises, "My body." He takes this wine and promises, "My blood." And always repeats his promise, "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." Do this in remembrance, for the remembrance, of him. And run with it!

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I

3

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“The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want,” if people only know one psalm, that psalm is Psalm 23, today’s responsorial psalm. Today, I would like to lead you in a reflection on this psalm.

*The Lord is my shepherd*. God wants to direct our lives. Jesus felt so bad for the people in today's Gospel because they had no one to shepherd them. He mourns also for us. The world can be a confusing place. Life can be confusing. Governments like those mentioned in the first reading, often demand that people violate their consciences for what they claim in the greater good. Historically, this has always resulted in the people participating in hidden, immoral agendas. We witnessed this happening the last century with the two extremes of fascism and communism. Most of the people of Germany did not have full knowledge of what the Nazis were doing to the Jews and others in the concentration camps. But they had a share of the guilt because in the name of national pride, they allowed bad shepherds to guide them. At the same time, there were good shepherds in Germany, people like Dietrich Bonhoeffer, who stood up for truth and died leading people to the Lord.

What should we do when we are confronted with what is presented as a small moral sacrifice for what is claimed to be a greater national good? This is not an easy question, particularly because we are invested in our country. We love America. But if we truly love our country, we need to shepherd it in ways that are just and merciful. We ourselves need a shepherd to guide us. We have one. The Lord is our shepherd. We should follow God. Right is right and wrong is wrong. We have to let God direct our lives, not politicians. This will protect us from taking the steps that would lead to great evil.

*I shall not want.* When I was a child, I thought that it is strange to say that I didn’t want God to be my shepherd. No, the phrase means that I will want for nothing. God provides that which we really need in life: a reason for being alive. Following our conscience leads us to rest in Christ, at peace with God and at peace with ourselves. People are looking for peace. The world provides stress. God provides rest. The psalm talks about restful waters. We can look at water for hours. From babbling brooks to the great oceans, it is so peaceful to look at the water. We let go of our stress. We just focus on the beauty before us. The psalm speaks about restful waters where God leads us. We can help others find those restful waters by encouraging them to be who they were meant to be, unique reflections of the image and likeness of God. There is peace in being true to ourselves.

*He restores our souls*. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount that we should be perfect as His Heavenly Father is Perfect. But how can we be perfect? We are human. We are  
frail. Sometimes people carry such guilt that they give up on themselves, on religion and even on God. We can be good shepherds for them. We can let them know that what the Lord is saying is that we should be sincere, truthful to our best selves. That is what the word that is used in the Sermon on the Mount really means. Be sincere as my heavenly Father is sincere. When our external actions reflect our inner beings, we are at one with God and with ourselves. We can help others find integrity in their lives by living as sincere people. Our souls can be are restored

to God's original purpose for our creation. Then we and they will be at peace. When we are at peace with ourselves and with our God, we want for nothing.

*And though I walk through the valley of death, I fear no evil.* Yes there are continual challenges in life. But the present life is just a part of the totality of our lives. Here, we are in the valley of death. We are mortal. We become sick and die. Worse, our loved ones die. Still, through all the pain, the suffering and the sorrow, we ultimately trust in God. *You are with me*, the Psalm proclaims. He is. He guides us with His rod and staff. He gives us gentle shoves, and sometimes not so gentle shoves. But we are comforted with knowing that whatever happens, the Lord is in charge. He will take care of us. In fact, even when others attack us for our devotion to Him, when others mock us for our faith, even when other Catholics deride us for our determination to live what we profess, God will win out. We can shepherd others to recognize this present reality: God always wins. Jesus Christ is the Victor. Those who oppose us because we live our faith will eventually witness God's caring for us at the banquet of His Love. *He sets a table before me in the face of my foes.*

Psalm 23 ends with the great promise: *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.* If we have the courage to live united to the Lord, we will experience his goodness and kindness in this life and union with Him in the next life.

The world needs good shepherds, and the world needs the Good Shepherd. Jesus was with His disciples when He felt the hurt of so many people without shepherds. He sent the disciples to care for his people, to shepherd them. The Lord still has pity on those in pain. Now we are the disciples. He sends us to bring healing, and mercy, and goodness and truth to the world.

We can be and we must be good shepherds.

4 DeSiano

We have all become very sensitive about our surroundings, especially fearing to go someplace strange or different. Two years ago we might enter a hotel room with a smile, wondering how big the TV screen might be; now we enter wondering if they have sanitized the room enough or if we will end up bringing a deadly virus to someone else because someone didn’t clean enough. All of this reminds me of an ironic movie called “The Accidental Tourist,” in which the protagonist, a travel editor, tries to make every hotel room he stays in look exactly the same. It’s as if he never left home. He always wants those things that make him feel self-assured surrounding him in the room.

Jesus is not into accidental tourism in the Gospel today; Jesus is into mission. Rather than having his apostles hang out and feel comfortable, Jesus is sending them out to do the very things that he himself has done. It’s as if a child went to swimming lessons and now it’s time to swim without the teacher’s support. “You have seen my ministry; now do it yourself.” Amos wanted to stay home, as the first reading shows, but God gave him a mission bigger than his flock and his sycamore trees.

Jesus knows this will not be easy because we are most comfortable staying in our own zone. He advises them to travel very lightly—not to bring extra things or extra money. He wants them to go out in great simplicity so that they will be forced to deal with others—to meet them, to engage with them, to depend on them for food and beddings, and to proclaim the Kingdom of God to them.

In other words, Jesus sends them out in great simplicity and he gives them a very simple message: they were to preach repentance, that is, a new way of seeing things because God was active in their lives. Their deeds were to bring healing and victory over the very forces that we think hold us back: cast out demons and anoint the sick to cure them. The demons are the illnesses of our spirits which distort and limit them; our spirits need healing even more than our bodies.  
He also teaches them not to worry about failure. Some people will hear their voices and be unmoved; but our mission is to speak God’s message, to do the deeds that show God’s presence, and trust that those who are ready will be able to see this. The ones who hear you will become part of a community of people who have been called and chosen to experience God in such a way that he want to spread that experience to others.  
As believers we may look stranger and stranger to people around us. This may make us want to crawl in a shell and play safe. But Jesus does not call us to crawl into shells. He calls us to be apostles and ambassadors of his healing and grace. He knows we are cautious. “Trust me,” he says. “I am always with you.”  
Perhaps each one of us can think of someone who needs a word of healing or consolation. After what we’ve been through, that might include just about everyone! But, for now, just think of one person and realize that God is sending you to that troubled heart. Start with that hurt, focus on God’s healing presence, and let the Kingdom shine through you.  
Now if we all did that, what might the impact be?